



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 46.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 16, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' IRON GRIP; ..(OR).. SQUEEZING THE REDCOATS. By HARRY MOORE.



Dick's grip was iron-like, and the redcoat was as helpless in the youth's hands as a babe would have been. The other redcoat stared in amazement.

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CHAPTER I.

SENT TO NEW YORK.

It was the last week in January, of the year 1777. General Washington, with the patriot army, occupied position at Morristown Heights. The British were at New Brunswick and New York City. General Washington had thrashed the British soundly at Trenton and at Princeton. The country was ringing with praises of the great man. Washington had turned the tables on the British so completely that they hardly knew what to think. The British general, Cornwallis, had thought that he had Washington where he could not escape, at the Assunpink, near Trenton, but the American general had given the British the slip, and now occupied an impregnable position at Morristown Heights. Washington had just issued a manifesto, in which he stated that all persons who had accepted the offer of the protection of the British, must retire within the British lines—or come forward and take the oath of allegiance to the American cause. The proclamation was productive of much good. The great majority of the people of New Jersey took the oath of allegiance. The British had earned the hatred of the people by their actions. They committed depredations of all kinds. They foraged indiscriminately upon those who were friendly to the British cause, the same as on those who were not. This, of course, caused the feeling to run high against them. The loyalist families who were robbed were very angry, and many of them turned around and became patriots. The farmers of the part of New Jersey in which the Tories now were, banded themselves together and lay in wait for the foraging parties of the British, and shot them on ambush. It got so that the British at New Brunswick suffered for want of food, frequently—which served them right.

It was about the middle of the afternoon of the last day of January, when an orderly left the building occupied as headquarters by General Washington, and made his way to a long, rambling, shed-like structure which sheltered hundreds of the patriot soldiers.

The orderly made his way to a point near the middle of this structure.

Here he entered and looked about him.

Fires were burning, here and there, and the soldiers were gathered about the fires to keep warm.

Near by was a group of youths who did not average more than eighteen years of age.

These were youths—there was a company of them—known as “The Liberty Boys of ’76.”

They were brave young fellows, and had done splendid work in a number of battles.

The orderly ran his eyes rapidly over the faces of the youths.

“Is Dick Slater here?” he called out.

“Here!”

As he spoke, a bright-looking, handsome and manly young fellow leaped to his feet.

This was Dick Slater, and he was the captain of the company.

“You are wanted at headquarters,” said the orderly.

“At once?” queried the youth.

“Yes, at once.”

“Very well; I will accompany you.”

The two made their way to the house occupied by the commander-in-chief.

They entered, and the orderly ushered Dick into the room in which sat General Washington.

“Dick Slater, your excellency,” announced the orderly.

Then he withdrew, leaving the two alone together.

General Washington was seated at a table, looking at some documents.

He did not look up for some moments, but went on with his reading.

Presently he folded the document which he had been reading.

Then he looked up and nodded to the youth.

"Ah, Dick, good afternoon!" he greeted.

"Good afternoon, your excellency!" replied Dick, saluting.

The great man indicated a chair.

"Be seated," he invited.

Dick sat down.

The commander-in-chief looked at Dick, keenly and searchingly, for a few moments; then he said:

"Dick, you have done considerable work for me, in the way of carrying messages, spying and so forth, and I know that when I give you a task you will accomplish it if such a thing is possible."

Dick flushed with pleasure, and also with embarrassment.

He was a modest youth, and could not hear himself praised without flushing up.

"I have always tried to do the work which you gave me to do, your excellency," he replied.

"Yes, and you have, as a rule, succeeded—better than any other man whom I have ever tried in the same line of work. That is the reason I have sent for you, now. I have some work for you to do."

"I shall be glad to attempt anything which you wish me to attempt, sir."

"I was sure of that; well, I have a difficult undertaking for you, this time."

"What, if I may ask, your excellency?"

"I'll tell you, Dick: Nearly four months have elapsed since Benjamin Franklin went to France as a commissioner, to try to get the French to assist us in our fight for Liberty. It is about time I had word from Franklin, and I wish you to go to New York, to a secret agent whom I have there, and learn if any news has come from the commissioner."

"Ah! I shall be glad to do this work, your excellency."

"It will be dangerous work, Dick."

"That does not matter."

"If you should be found out, you would be shot or hung!"

"I am aware of that, your excellency."

"But the knowledge makes no difference, eh?"

"None whatever, sir."

"And you are ready to go to New York on this mission?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Good! And you can start at once?"

"Within the hour, if necessary, sir."

"It will not be necessary to use such haste in getting off, Dick. Go and make your preparations, taking your time for it, and when you are ready, come back here and

I will give you a letter of introduction to the agent in New York."

"Very well, your excellency."

Then Dick saluted and departed.

He hastened back to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

They were eager to learn what it was that the commander-in-chief wished with Dick.

"I'm to go to New York, boys," Dick told them.

"To New York!" exclaimed Bob Estabrook, a bright handsome youth of about Dick's age. "Say, I wish I could go with you!"

"Jove! I wish I could go!" from Mark Morrison, another bright-looking youth.

Dick shook his head and laughed.

"I guess you will have to be satisfied to remain behind boys," he said; "I am to go alone."

A series of groans went up from the youths at this.

"That's the way!"

"Dick always gets all the good things!"

"He's a lucky rascal!"

"I wish I was in his shoes!"

Such were a few of the exclamations given utterance to by the "Liberty Boys."

It was all good-natured, however.

The youths fairly worshipped Dick.

They were not jealous of him at all.

They knew he was a favorite with the commander-in-chief, but it only made them the prouder of their young commander.

Dick understood this, and smiled.

"That is all right, boys," he said; "your turn will come one of these days."

"I hope so!"

"So do I!"

"And I!"

"I'm afraid not, Dick."

"We will never get much chance to distinguish ourselves so long as you are around!"

Dick went ahead with his preparations for making the trip to New York.

He donned a suit of ordinary citizen's clothing.

Of course, he would not dare wear his uniform into the city.

When he had completed his arrangements, in so far as himself was concerned, he went and bridled and saddled his horse.

He brought the animal and tied him in front of the building.

Then he went back to headquarters, and reported that he was ready to start to New York.

The commander-in-chief handed Dick a folded paper.

"That is a letter of introduction to my agent, M. Dumont," he said. "It tells him all that is necessary, and he will hand you a letter to bring to me."

Dick placed the paper in an inside pocket of his coat.

Then the commander-in-chief told Dick the number and street where M. Dumont would be found.

The youth made a mental note of it.

"You won't forget it?" the commander-in-chief asked.

"No, your excellency."

"Because, if you think there is danger that you will do so, we had better write it down. The reason I haven't written the address is because I was afraid it might fall into the hands of the British, and I don't wish to attract their attention that way."

"I will remember the address, your excellency."

"Good! And have you all your arrangements made for the trip?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"You must put on plenty of warm clothing, for it is very cold, Dick."

"I have done so, sir."

"You have selected a good horse?"

"Yes, your excellency; I have Major, the horse I captured from the British that time on Long Island. There is no better animal in this country."

The commander-in-chief nodded.

"He is, indeed, an excellent animal. Well, you must be very careful, Dick. Don't let the redcoats ambush you or capture you."

"I will not, if I can prevent it, your excellency."

"I am sure of that!" with a smile.

Then General Washington took Dick's hand and shook it warmly.

"Good-by, my boy, and success to you!" he said.

"Good-by, your excellency!"

Then Dick saluted and withdrew.

The youths were waiting on Dick to eat supper with them.

They wouldn't commence eating till he was ready.

All sat down, now, and pitched in.

The "Liberty Boys" were never bothered with lack of appetite.

Occasionally they were bothered to get something to satisfy their appetites.

But it wasn't so on this occasion.

They had plenty, such as it was.

And they ate heartily, laughing, talking and cracking jokes as they did so.

They were a jolly set, those "Liberty Boys."

It was impossible for it to be dull where they were.

But occasionally there was a let up to the mirth.

This was when they would remember that Dick was about to start on a dangerous expedition to New York City.

They were well aware of the fact that when a patriot entered the city of New York, he took his life in his hands.

Dick, however, was one of the liveliest and jolliest of the lot.

He felt that way, and there was no put-on about it.

He was going on a dangerous expedition, true, but he really enjoyed such work, and the thought of the dangers ahead only added to the zest of the affair.

The meal was ended at last.

Dick donned his overcoat and gloves.

"Well, boys, I must go," he said; "take care of yourselves while I'm away."

"We will; and you must do the same!"

"Yes, indeed; it is you who must take care of yourself!"

"Be careful, Dick!"

"Don't let the redcoats gobble you!"

Such were a few of the exclamations and suggestions.

"I'll look out for myself, boys," replied Dick, with a smile.

"When will you be back, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I don't know, Bob; my return will be governed by circumstances which I cannot now foresee."

Then he went outside, mounted and rode away, followed by the cheers of the "Liberty Boys."

CHAPTER II.

DICK IS HELD UP.

It was now dark, but there was considerable snow on the ground, and this made it light enough so that it was easy to follow the road.

Dick went directly eastward.

Morristown is almost west from New York.

The youth rode onward at a brisk gallop.

It began to snow.

Dick did not mind this.

He loved snow.

Then, too, it was sure to be warmer if it snowed.

Of course, if it snowed hard enough to make a very deep covering, it would be bad going for the horse; but Major

was a magnificent animal, and could make good time, anyway.

Dick rode onward for nearly an hour.

Then he entered the timber which bordered a branch of the Passaic River.

The youth was unsuspecting of danger.

The main army of redcoats was at New Brunswick, nearly thirty miles to the southward.

Therefore, he was taken wholly by surprise when just before he reached the stream two men leaped out in the road in front of him and called upon him to halt.

They were redcoats.

It was not so dark but the youth could see that their coats were red.

They held muskets, and had the youth covered.

"Hallo! What does this mean?" Dick asked, his tone being more of surprise than alarm.

"It means that you must give an account of yourself!" was the reply.

"Oh, I must give an account of myself, eh?"

"That is it, exactly."

"Well, I guess I can do that. What is it you wish to know?"

Dick was thinking rapidly.

He felt that he was in a trap; but he did not intend to stay in it.

He had no thought of letting two redcoats capture him.

And at such an early stage of his journey, too!

It would not do at all.

So he kept up a lively thinking, trying to evolve some plan which would extricate him from the trouble.

He did not bring Major to a complete stop.

He had simply brought him down to a slow walk, and was slowly but surely approaching the two men in the road.

They noted this fact, presently.

"Stop!" cried one. "Don't let that horse come a step nearer!"

Dick brought Major to a full stop.

He was now not more than twenty feet from the redcoats.

"Well," he said, "now I have stopped, what is it that you wish?"

Dick had not as yet outlined any plan which he thought would work.

He kept up a lively thinking, however.

"We want to know who you are," was the reply.

"Oh, you wish to know who I am?"

"Yes."

"I don't see why you should wish to know that."

"You don't?"

"I do not."

"Well, it doesn't make any difference whether you understand it or not."

"Oh, it doesn't?"

Dick was talking for time.

He wished to have time enough to decide upon a plan to enable him to get out of the scrape.

"No, it doesn't!" in a threatening tone. "And now, who are you?"

"My name is Sam Martin."

"Sam Martin, eh?"

"Yes."

"Where do you live?"

"About two miles from here."

"Where are you going?"

"To New York."

"To New York, eh?"

"Yes."

"What are you going to New York for?"

The redcoat's tone was full of suspicion.

"I am going there to visit my uncle."

"To visit your uncle, eh?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware that this is rather a queer time of the day—or night, rather—to start on a visit?"

"It may seem so to you, but it is easily explained."

"Explain, then."

"It is this way: I had some work which had to be done, and I worked at it all day, and could not start until after nightfall."

"Why didn't you wait till to-morrow?"

"Well, I was expected by my uncle, this evening; and I wish to get there as nearly on time as possible, so started to-night."

The redcoats seemed hardly to know what to think about this.

"What do you think about this story of the young fellow, Saunders?" asked one.

"I think it sounds a little bit far-fetched," was the reply.

"It seems so to me, also."

Then he asked:

"What are you, rebel or loyalist?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Well, I don't know that I am either," replied Dick slowly and thoughtfully; "most all my folks are loyalists, though, and I suppose that I would be a loyalist, too."

"Oh, most all your folks are loyalists, are they?"

"Yes."

"Is this uncle whom you are going to visit in New York loyalist?"

"I think he is."

"What do you think of it, Saunders?" the redcoat asked.

"Well, I don't know; the young fellow may be telling the truth, and then again he may not be."

"That's it; you can't always tell. Some of these young Americans are terrors."

"So they are; worse than the men."

"You are right; just think of the doings of those young fellows who call themselves 'The Liberty Boys of '76!' They are terrors, and no mistake!"

"Indeed they are!"

"Yes; they have caused us more trouble than the entire rebel army."

"You are right about that; and this fellow may be telling us the biggest kind of a lie."

"I assure you that I am telling you only the truth, gentlemen," said Dick.

"That may be," was the reply, "but we have no guaranty that it is the truth."

"Nothing but my word, but I assure you I have spoken only the truth. I would not attempt to deceive you."

"I'll tell you what we will do, Saunders," said the redcoat who had done most of the talking.

"What?"

"We will search the young fellow, and if we find nothing on his person that is in any way suspicious, then we will let him go on his way."

"That is a good idea," agreed Saunders.

But it did not suit Dick, at all.

If they were to search him they would find the letter of introduction to M. Dumont, which had been given to him by General Washington.

That, of course, would not do at all.

It would be fatal.

Dick must not permit himself to be searched.

He must think of some excuse to put them off, if possible; and if this failed he would have to make a fight.

Of course, he intended to fight, anyway, if it was necessary.

He decided to try to talk the pair out of their idea of making search.

"I assure you, gentlemen, that you will be going to a great deal of unnecessary trouble," said Dick; "I am just what I claim to be, and you will find nothing on my person to prove otherwise."

"Perhaps not," the redcoat replied; "we will be able to tell better about that after we have made the search."

"That's right," said Saunders, approvingly.

"Get down off your horse!" ordered the other.

"Gentlemen, I protest," said Dick; "I will get my feet soaked, if I alight, as this soft snow will penetrate my shoes like water, and I will catch my death of cold."

"Oh, there isn't any danger of that, I guess," with a careless laugh.

"That is nothing to us," said the other, with a chuckle.

"But it is considerable to me," said Dick. "I hope you will give up this idea of searching for me, and permit me to ride on my way in peace."

"Couldn't think of it," was the harsh reply; "get down and be quick about it!"

The redcoats had lowered their muskets soon after they began questioning Dick.

The weapons were heavy, and they did not care to hold them extended at arm's length.

Then, too, they had become possessed of the idea that the youth was harmless.

He did not look dangerous.

So now, when they ordered the youth to dismount, he was not likely to obey, since he would have a chance to do something without being in very great danger.

Dick had calculated everything.

He had made up his mind what to do.

Instead of obeying the command of the redcoat, he made a move which astonished them.

He spoke to his horse—quickly, sharply.

"Forward, Major!"

As he spoke thus, he touched the horse in the flanks with his bootheels.

He did not wear spurs, as Major was an animal that did not need anything of this kind to get him along.

Major responded instantly.

He leaped forward, straight toward the redcoats.

Indeed, he struck at them with his forefeet.

He seemed to possess almost human intelligence.

He had been stopped so often on the road in this manner that he seemed to know that the two were enemies of his rider.

The redcoats uttered cries of dismay, and attempted to leap out of the way.

One escaped, but the other was struck a glancing blow by one of the hoofs, and knocked down.

"Now, then, away you go, old fellow!" cried Dick.

The horse bounded away, up the road.

The redcoats uttered curses, and howled for Dick to stop.

"Halt! Halt, or we will fire!" they cried.

They had dropped their muskets in the snow, however, and the weapons were not in a condition for service.

They drew their pistols as soon as they discovered this fact, and fired four shots after Dick.

He was at such a distance, however, that the bullets did not carry up, and so was in no danger whatever.

"Good-by!" the youth called back. "I'm sorry to leave you, but I am in a great hurry, and cannot afford to lose any more time."

Dick looked back as he said this.

He saw that the redcoats were running into the timber. He thought he understood this move.

"They have horses in among the trees," he thought; "and they are going to give chase!"

He chuckled as he thought of this.

"I guess they will have to have mighty good horses if they keep in sight of Major!" he murmured.

He kept looking back, as he rode, and soon saw the redcoats emerge from the timber.

They were leading a couple of horses.

"Just as I expected," thought Dick; "well, they will find that they might as well try to catch a thunderbolt as to try to overtake Major."

The redcoats did not know the youth was so well-mounted, however.

They had good mounts, and thought they stood a good chance of overtaking the youth.

"We'll catch him!" cried the one who had been addressed as Saunders.

"I think so!" growled the other.

They mounted quickly, and lashed their horses into a gallop.

The animals sped up the road at a good speed.

Their riders kept their eyes on the fugitive.

They had expected to see the distance between them cut down rapidly, and were astonished to see that nothing of the kind occurred.

"By Jove! the young fellow has a good horse!" cried Saunders.

"You are right, he has!" from the other.

Presently, to the still greater surprise of the redcoats they became aware of the fact that the fugitive was drawing away from them.

"Blazes!" exclaimed Saunders. "The fellow is widening the gap between us, old man!"

"It looks that way," was the reply, in a growl.

"Yes, he has a better horse than either of ours."

Then a cry of delight escaped the two in unison.

"There are some of the boys! They'll head the young fellow off!" exclaimed Saunders.

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT IS SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE IS SAUCE FOR THE GANDER."

Saunders had spoken truly.

Half a dozen horsemen had ridden out into the road a couple of hundred yards in front of Dick.

They were undoubtedly redcoats.

Dick saw this at a glance.

Their red coats were easily discernible, the snow making it light enough so that colors could be distinguished.

Dick was now between two fires.

He seemed to be in a trap.

He hardly knew what to do under the circumstances.

He decided to let circumstances in a measure govern matters.

He did not slacken the speed of his horse an iota.

Instead he urged Major to renewed exertions.

Saunders and his comrade fearing that the newcomers might let the fugitive get past them, yelled out at the top of their voices:

"Stop him!"

"Don't let him get past you!"

They were more than a quarter of a mile distant from the newcomers, but the night was so still that their words could be plainly distinguished.

"Halt!" cried the leader of the body of redcoats.

Dick was desperate.

He was determined not to surrender.

Instead of obeying the order to stop, he urged Major to his best speed.

He rode directly toward the redcoats.

It seemed to be the act of a madman.

But there was method in Dick's madness.

He sometimes did things which seemed to be utterly reckless.

He always had a good reason for so doing, however.

It was so in this case.

He intended to open up a way through the force of redcoats.

As he urged Major forward, Dick drew his pistols.

The bridle reins rested on Major's neck—he was a horse who needed no guidance in cases of this kind.

This was good for Dick as it left him free to use both hands.

"Out of the way!" he cried in a fierce tone of voice.

Of course he did not expect that the redcoats would obey, but he wished to give them warning.

"Out of the way, or take the consequences!" he cried, then——

Crack! crack!

Dick fired both pistols.

They were snap shots as Dick could not stop to take aim.

They were good shots, however.

Two of the redcoats threw up their hands and fell from their horses.

This created consternation among the redcoats.

The horses that were without riders reared up and whirling around, struck against the horses ridden by the other redcoats and caused the animals to go plunging out toward the sides of the road.

This left a road open for Dick, straight through the middle.

Major plunged onward and went through like a shot.

By the time the redcoats regained control of their horses, Dick was fifty yards away and going like the wind.

The redcoats leaped to the ground to render assistance to their wounded comrades, and while they were engaged in this task the other two redcoats rode up.

"Did the young scoundrel kill somebody?" asked Saunders.

"A couple of the boys are pretty hard hit," was the reply; "but I don't know that they are fatally wounded. Who is that young scoundrel, anyway?"

"I don't know who he is, but I suspect that he is a rebel spy."

"After him, then, and capture him!"

"We can go after him, but the catching part of it is another matter. He has a wonderfully swift horse."

"So he has; well, go ahead and catch him if you can. Two of our boys will go with you, while the other two will remain here and look after Harding and Jeffries."

Two of the redcoats remounted their horses and in company with Saunders and his comrade, rode away in pursuit of Dick.

The youth saw them coming, but was not alarmed.

"Four cannot travel any more swiftly than two," he said to himself, "and I don't think they will be able to catch me."

The redcoats used both whip and spurs on their animals.

They urged the horses onward at top speed.

It was no use, however.

They could not gain on the fugitive.

Major was a magnificent animal, one that would have made a mark on any race track, and in addition to having speed, he was possessed of wonderful staying qualities.

Although he was not doing anywhere near his best, Major was drawing gradually away from the pursuers.

Dick leaned forward and patted the horse on the neck.

"Good boy!" he said. "You are showing those fellows a clean pair of heels."

The horse gave utterance to a little neigh.

It almost seemed as if he understood what was said to him.

Dick looked back over his shoulder.

"Well, I am safe out of that scrape," he murmured; "it was a close rub, though. I thought for a few moments that they would get me."

Dick gradually drew away from his pursuers.

At last the redcoats were left clear out of sight, and feeling that he was in no danger, whatever, from them, Dick dismissed them from his mind.

He slackened Major's speed down to an ordinary gallop.

"There is no need of tiring yourself out, old fellow," he said; "I think it will be perfectly safe for you to take it easy."

For the next half hour Dick kept a sharp lookout behind him.

His thought was that perhaps the redcoats might continue the pursuit.

But such evidently was not the case.

He did not see the redcoats again.

A few minutes later Dick entered the timber bordering the Passaic River.

Just before he reached the river he came suddenly upon a scene which made his blood boil with anger.

Near the roadside was a large log cabin, the home of a settler.

In front of the house, and not ten paces from the road, was a little group of men.

The men were in disguise, the disguise consisting of a coarse sack with arm, mouth, nose and eye holes cut in it, this unique garment being pulled down over the head.

No matter how well one might have known the men, it would have been utterly impossible to recognize them.

Besides these men of whom perhaps there were half a dozen were three other persons.

One of these was a man who was tied to a tree, his face toward the tree and his back outward.

Two of the disguised men held heavy hickory switches in their hands and were taking turns in striking the man tied to the tree.

A little ways to one side stood a woman and a girl of sixteen or seventeen years of age.

Both were weeping violently.

The man tied to the tree was evidently the husband and father of the woman and girl.

At least this was the way Dick sized the matter up.

Dick decided to take a hand in the affair.

Although there were six of the disguised men, he did not hesitate.

It was not Dick's nature to stop and count the odds against him, especially in a case of this kind.

Neither did he stop to ask questions.

He did not consider this to be necessary.

He rode right up to within ten feet of the party of disguised men.

As there was no fence, he had no trouble in doing this.

The snow on the ground acted as a cushion for the hoofs of the horse, and they made no noise whatever.

Dick had reloaded his pistols while riding along.

He now drew them from his belt and leveled them at the disguised men.

As the eyes of all the men, and the woman and girl, were on the man bound to the tree, no one had seen Dick's approach.

The first they knew that any one was there was when Dick cried out in a loud, stern tone of voice:

"Stop that, you cowardly scoundrels! What are you about, anyway?"

Cries of astonishment escaped all, and as the disguised men whirled, and saw themselves threatened by the pistols in the hands of the youth, they gave utterance to cries of anger.

"Oh, sir, save my husband from these bad men!" cried the woman, in an eager, pleading voice. "Don't let them whip him any more!"

"The next man that touches him, I'll shoot dead in his tracks!" said Dick, sternly.

"Who in blazes air ye, anyhow?" growled one of the men.

"Yas, an' by whut right do ye interfere?" from another.

As the men spoke their hands moved toward their weapons.

"Don't attempt to draw your pistols!" cried Dick. "I'll put a bullet through the first man that does attempt it!" The men hesitated.

There was something in the tone of the youth which convinced the men that he meant what he said.

Their hands dropped to their sides.

They were very angry, however, and muttered threats.

"Who air ye, anyhow?" asked one of the men.

"That is none of your business; it is enough for you

that I am one who will not stand quietly by

—brutes, I should have said—abuse one

What has he done, anyway?"

"Nothing, sir; absolutely nothing," said the woman, in a trembling voice. "The only thing they can say against him is that he is a 'rebel,' that he is not loyal to the king."

"Then you are Tories?" remarked Dick, interrogatively.

There was something in Dick's tone that caused the men to hesitate to answer.

Instinctively they seemed to realize that this youth was not a Tory.

"Waal, we—that is—I guess——" stammered one of the disguised men.

"That will do!" said Dick, sternly. "You are Tories there is no doubt about that; and there is just as little doubt that you are cowards and brutes. Do you know what I would like to do to you fellows?"

"No, I kain't say thet I do."

"Well, I'll tell you: I'd like to take you by the throat, one at a time, and choke you till you are black in the face. It has been said of me that I have an iron grip, and it would give me the greatest pleasure in the world—if I had the time to waste in such a fashion—to prove that such is the case, in the manner that I have stated. You mean, miserable, cowardly scoundrels, aren't you ashamed of yourselves?"

The men shrank back.

The stern and accusing voice and looks of the youth awed and frightened them.

All seemed to be afraid to make a reply, and Dick made a threatening movement with his pistols, and said:

"Some one of you fellows cut that man loose from the tree, and do it quickly!"

Two of the disguised men leaped to obey Dick's order.

They quickly cut the ropes binding the man.

"You are free," said Dick, as the man turned and faced him; "have they hurt you very much?"

"Not as much as they would have hurt me, I judge; it wasn't very pleasant, however."

"I judge not," remarked Dick, drily. "How do you feel—strong enough to wield a switch?"

A grim look of pleasure appeared on the man's face.

The six disguised men fidgeted about and turned their heads as if contemplating making a dash for their liberty.

"Don't think of trying to get away," said Dick, sternly.

"I'm going to let you go, all right, but not until after you have been given a dose of your own medicine. You will now step up and stand with your face to the tree; one of you at a time, and this gentleman here will give you a dozen good, sound cuts with the switch. The first man who refuses to take his place at the tree will be shot down in his tracks; don't think that I will hesitate to do it, for I will

not. I look upon you as human wolves and will treat you as such!"

The man picked up one of the switches and took up his position, ready to administer the floggings.

There was a grim look on his face which showed that he was determined to make a good job of it.

As he was a well-built, muscular man, Dick believed that he would be able to inflict considerable punishment.

Dick made a motion with one of his pistols.

"Take your place there, one of you!" he ordered. "It doesn't matter which one of you go first, for you will all have to go through the mill!"

One of the men took his place, with his face to the tree.

"Now, go ahead, sir," said Dick; "lay it on, good and heavy."

"You may be sure I'll do that," said the man.

And he did.

He welted the disguised man so soundly that he howled like a good fellow.

"Now the next one," said Dick, when this one had received his twelve welts.

One after another the other four were put through the same ordeal, and the man wielded the heavy switch to such effect that he brought howls of pain to the lips of each and every one of the disguised men.

"There!" said Dick, when this was finished, "now you scoundrels know how it feels, yourselves, to have a heavy switch laid across your shoulders; I will just say that you may consider yourselves extremely fortunate that you have escaped so easily. Next time, you may not do so. So if you will take my advice, you will never again attempt anything of this kind. That is all—go!"

Dick shook his pistol, threateningly, and the six disguised men did not hesitate an instant, but went at once.

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNWELCOME COMPANION.

The men crossed the road and disappeared in the timber.

Dick watched them till they were out of sight.

Then he turned toward the three.

"Oh, sir! How can we ever repay you for what you have done?" exclaimed the woman.

"I don't want pay for such work as that," laughed Dick; "it was a pleasure."

"We owe you our thanks, anyway," said the man, earnestly.

"Oh, that is all right. You are more than welcome."

"We would like to know to whom we owe our thanks," said the woman.

Dick laughed.

"Did those men tell the truth when they said you were a patriot?" he asked of the man.

The man nodded.

"Yes," he replied, "they told the truth."

"And they were Tories?"

"Yes."

"And your neighbors, likely?"

"Yes, without doubt. I have an idea that I would know each and every one of them if I were to get a look at their faces."

"You will have to keep a sharp lookout for them in the future."

"I shall do so; I do not intend to let them catch me napping again."

"But your name, young sir; you haven't told us who you are," insisted the woman.

"Perhaps the gentleman has reasons for not wishing to tell us, wife," said the man; "these are troublous times, you know."

"I do not mind telling you folks, now that I know you are patriots," said Dick. "My name is Dick Slater."

"What!" exclaimed the man, in excitement. "Not Dick Slater, the patriot spy, the captain of the company of 'Liberty Boys?'"

"The same," nodded Dick.

"Well, well!" said the man. "This is a surprise! Wife, this is Dick Slater, the young man of whom we have heard so much. I am glad to have met you!" and he shook hands with the youth.

The woman also gave her hand to the youth, and then the girl did the same.

"My name is Martin Welbrook," said the man, "and these are my wife and my daughter, Elsie."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, all," said Dick, lifting his hat and bowing to the two ladies. Then he said:

"You had better keep your door bolted of nights, from now on. Those scoundrels may take it into their heads to pay you another visit."

"I hardly think they will do so, after what they received here, to-night, Mr. Slater; but I shall be very careful, and will keep my door barred and thus make sure of it."

Then the woman spoke up:

"Will you stop over night with us, Mr. Slater?" she asked.

"No," he replied; "I am on my way to New York, and must not stop."

"Ah, I see!" said the man. "On important business, eh?"

"Yes; and it is important that I reach the city during the night, as it will be less dangerous than if I were to wait and enter in the daytime."

"I can understand that, and we will not insist on your staying over night with us, though we should be pleased to have you do so."

"And I should be pleased to stay, under other circumstances, Mr. Welbrook," said Dick; "as it is, however, I shall have to bid you good-night."

Then Dick lifted his hat, and, turning his horse's head toward the road, rode away.

"There goes a brave and noble-hearted youth, if ever there was one!" said Mr. Welbrook.

"Yes, indeed!" agreed his wife.

"And isn't he handsome!" exclaimed the girl.

"He probably saved your life, Martin," said the woman.

"You are doubtless right, Maria; there is no telling what those scoundrels might have done if he had not come and put a stop to their work."

"Let us go into the house and bolt the door, husband," said the woman, nervously; "they might return."

"I don't think there is any danger; but it will do no harm to be on the safe side."

The three entered the house and closed and barred the door.

Dick rode onward at a good rate.

He had lost nearly half an hour of time at the cabin, and wished to make it up.

Major was willing, and galloped onward in a brisk manner.

Half an hour later he crossed the Hackensack River.

Then Dick bore slightly to the northward.

He wished to strike the Hudson River at a point near the northern end of Manhattan Island.

This was not the first time he had visited New York City since the redcoats had had control there.

At the end of another half hour Dick reached the Hudson.

At the point where he reached the stream, a not-much-traveled road led down through the timber.

Where this road struck the river there was a small flatboat owned by a patriot.

The boat was just large enough to hold one team and wagon.

There was not a great deal of ferrying to do, here, but the owner of the boat earned something at it, and by killing wild game and selling it to the redcoats down in the city, managed to make a very fair living.

The ferryman's cabin, a small, one-room, log affair, stood just beside the road, and not thirty feet above the water of the river—the bank being quite steep here.

Dick rode right up in front of the house and dismounted.

Stepping forward, he knocked on the door.

"Who is there?" called out a voice.

The reply had come almost instantly, proving that the man in the cabin was a light sleeper.

"A friend; open the door!" called out Dick.

"What do you want?" was the next question.

"I wish to be ferried across the river."

There was no reply to this.

Dick heard the sound of footsteps, however.

The footsteps approached the door.

There was the noise of fumbling, and the youth heard the man lift the bar out of place and deposit it on the floor.

Then the door swung open.

A tall, muscular man stood revealed in the open doorway.

He peered out at the youth.

"Hello, is it you, Dick?" he suddenly exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I, Hank," the youth replied.

"Why didn't you say so when I asked who you were?"

"I was afraid there might be somebody in there with you."

"Oh, I see; you are on a secret mission to the city, eh?"

"Yes, that is it, exactly, Hank; and I wish to be set across the river."

"Right away, eh?"

"Yes."

"Say, Dick, I'm afraid I'll ferry you across this river for the last time, one of these days."

Dick laughed.

"Oh, I guess not, Hank," he replied; "at least, I hope not."

"So do I; but every time I say to myself that this will probably be the last time I will set Dick across the river."

"And still I keep coming."

"Yes; you've been lucky, Dick."

"I rather think so, myself."

The man quickly donned his overcoat and hat and stepped out of the cabin.

"Come," he said; "I am ready to set you across the river."

The two made their way down to the water's edge, and Dick led Major aboard the boat.

It was not the first time Major had been aboard the boat, and he betrayed no uneasiness.

The ferryman was just on the point of pushing the boat out into the river when he and Dick were startled by a hail from the bank above.

"Hallo, there! Wait a minute!"

The two looked up in astonishment.

They were somewhat startled, too.

They saw a horseman.

The horseman was a redcoat, too!

It was light enough so they could distinguish the red coat of the uniform.

"Hello, yourself! What do you want?" responded the ferryman.

"I want to go across with you. Wait!"

A muttered exclamation escaped Hank.

He looked at Dick, inquiringly.

"Let him come," said Dick, in a low voice; "he's only one man."

Hank understood what Dick meant.

The youth was willing to have the redcoat come along, feeling able to take care of himself against one enemy.

"Is your horse frisky?" asked Hank.

"Oh, no," replied the newcomer; "he is as gentle as a kitten."

"All right; come along, then."

The redcoat rode down the embankment, and, leaping to the ground, led his horse onto the flatboat.

"All right; go ahead," he said.

Hank started the boat.

The redcoat paid no attention to Hank, but eyed Dick closely.

The youth had his eyes on the fellow, and was aware that he was the subject of scrutiny.

"He isn't one of the men whom I had my encounter with, to-night," the youth thought; "well, I'm glad of that."

It was slow work crossing the river, but scarcely any words were uttered by the men.

The redcoat spoke soothingly to his horse two or three times, when the animal became uneasy, and insisted on moving about, and that was all.

The other side was reached, finally.

Dick paid the ferryman the fee for bringing him across, and Hank found a chance to whisper in the youth's ear:

"Look out for this fellow! He may try to go for you, after you get away from here."

"I'll watch him," replied Dick, in a whisper.

He led Major off the boat, and the redcoat followed suit.

He, too, paid the fee, and then as he was preparing to mount, said to Dick:

"Are you going to the city?"

Dick thought he might as well tell the truth, so replied:

"Yes, I am bound for New York."

"Good! We'll go along together. It will be a relief to have company on the road."

"So it will," agreed Dick, though he was not so well satisfied as the redcoat seemed to be.

They rode slowly up the bluff together, and, waving their hands to the ferryman, disappeared from his sight.

"Jove! I hope Dick won't let that redcoat get the better of him in any way!" thought Hank.

Dick and the redcoat rode along at a moderate pace.

The redcoat was evidently curious regarding Dick, and the youth judged that he was a bit suspicious, also.

His questions indicated this.

Dick was apparently so frank in his answers to the fellow's questions, however, that it seemed as if he must disarm whatever suspicion the other felt.

"And you are going to the city on business, eh?" the redcoat remarked.

Dick had told this story, fearing to say that he was going to visit an uncle, as the man would likely ask the name of the uncle and where he lived, and this would make the situation awkward in the extreme, as Dick would be unable to answer these questions.

"Yes, on business," replied Dick.

"I suppose you would think me inquisitive if I was to ask what the business is that you are going to New York to transact?" insinuated the redcoat.

"Well," replied Dick, "I don't know that there would be any particular objections to telling the business, but I was instructed not to say a thing about it, and I think it best to obey orders."

"Oh, yes; no doubt about that," agreed the redcoat, but it was plain that he was not pleased.

"I thought it possible that I might be of benefit to you," the man explained; "I am familiar with all the ins and outs of the city, you know, while you say that you are a stranger there."

"So I am," replied Dick, "and I thank you for your kind interest in my welfare. I guess I will be able to get along, however."

"Oh, I suppose so. If you will tell me to which part of the city you wish to go, however, I shall be glad to accompany you thither."

"I am much obliged," said Dick, "but I fear that I shall have to refuse to take advantage of your offer."

The redcoat muttered something unintelligible and was silent for a few minutes afterward.

Dick hoped that the redcoat would let the matter rest.

Such was not to be the case, however.

The man was not through.

Presently he turned his face toward Dick, and, looking at him searchingly, said:

"Do you know, it seems to me that you are unusually close-mouthed about your affairs?"

"No, I didn't know it," replied Dick; "is that so?"

"Yes; and do you know what I think?"

"No; what?"

"That you are a rebel spy!"

CHAPTER V.

SHADOWED.

The redcoat almost hissed the words.

As he spoke he drew a pistol.

If he thought to catch the youth napping, however, he made a mistake.

Dick was on his guard—had been on his guard all the time.

So when the man said that Dick was a "rebel" spy, the youth was prompt to act.

As the redcoat drew the pistol, Dick's fist shot out.

He was riding right beside the man, and was well within reach.

His fist caught the fellow full on the jaw.

It was a strong blow.

The redcoat was knocked off his horse as cleanly as if he had been struck by a sledgehammer.

His pistol fell to the snow-covered ground.

The horse became frightened and galloped away, up the road.

Dick did not wish to kill or injure the redcoat.

So, thinking that the best plan for him to pursue was to get away from the vicinity, the youth urged Major to a gallop, and followed the redcoat's horse.

"Hold on, there! Wait! Stop, or I'll fire!"

Such were some of the cries which came to Dick's ears.

He looked back.

The redcoat had scrambled to his feet and drawn his other pistol.

"Good-by!" called back Dick. "I'm going after your horse. Wait there till I come back with the animal."

Crack!

The answer to Dick's words was a pistol shot.

Evidently the redcoat did not take much stock in the youth's statement.

The redcoat was a bad marksman, however.

At any rate, Dick did not hear the whistle of the bullet.

"You had better go and take lessons in pistol shooting!" he called back over his shoulder.

Then Dick chuckled to himself.

"I'll wager that fellow is mad!" he muttered. "There he is, left afoot in the snow, and five miles from the city, if a mile. That will be a pretty walk. Perhaps, though, he will be able to secure another horse at a farmhouse."

Dick rode steadily onward at a gallop.

The redcoat's horse kept on going at a good rate, and it was not till a couple of miles had been traversed that Dick overtook the animal.

Then the youth took the animal's bridle-rein over his arm and led the horse.

His idea was to lead the animal till almost to the city and then turn it loose.

He did not wish the horse to stop, so that the redcoat might get hold of the animal again, and overhaul him before he got to the city.

"I think that redcoat needs some exercise, anyway," thought Dick; "and walking is splendid exercise."

When he was within half a mile of New York City, Dick turned the horse loose and rode onward.

Dick soon reached the Common.

He galloped across it.

He entered Broadway at the point where it struck the Common, and rode southward.

Presently he turned to the right.

He rode only half a block in this direction.

Then he stopped.

He was in front of a livery stable.

As Dick led the animal through the partially open door, a man stepped forward.

"I wish to leave my horse here for a while," said Dick.

"All right, young fellow," was the reply.

Then the man called a stable-boy and turned Major over to him.

Dick turned and left the stable.

The instant he was out upon the walk the man opened the door of a combined office and sleeping-room and called to a man sitting before the fire.

"Hey, Red!"

"What d'ye want?" was the growling reply.

"Come here, quick!"

The fellow who had been addressed as "Red"—on account of his hair, probably, for he had fiery red hair—rose quickly and stepped out of the room into the stable proper.

"What is et?" he growlingly asked.

"Come here, quick!"

The man caught hold of Red's arm and half dragged him to the doorway.

He pointed up the street to where Dick was walking along, going toward Broadway.

"See that fellow?" the man asked, eagerly.

Red nodded.

"Yes; what uv et?"

"Just this: That young chap is Dick Slater, a rebel spy, and there is a reward of five hundred pounds offered for his capture!"

Red started, and an exclamation escaped him.

"Ye don' mean et?"

His tone was eager.

"Yes, I do mean it!"

"How d'ye know he is Dick Slater?"

"Because I know Dick Slater when I see him. I saw him, once, and knew him the moment he entered the stable."

"He was in the stable—here?"

"Yes."

"Then why in blazes didn't ye nab 'im?"

"Why didn't I nab him?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's simple enough: He is Dick Slater, and one of the most dangerous fellows in the country. I didn't feel like taking the chances; but you can follow him, now, and see where he goes, and then we can get some of the boys and go and try to take him prisoner."

"Bah! I'll do the trick alone!"

Red's face expressed the contempt which he felt toward his companion for having been afraid to attack Dick.

The other shook his head.

"Don't risk it, Red," he advised; "Dick Slater is a bad man, and if you were to attack him you would probably get the worst of it. Track him down, and then get help, and capture him."

"Bah! I won't need no help."

Dick had almost reached Broadway, now, and fearing he might lose sight of his quarry if he delayed longer, Red left the stable and hastened after the youth.

Of course, Dick had no suspicion that he had been recognized.

Had he known that such was the case he would have been on his guard, but not suspecting such a thing, he did not think of keeping a lookout, save in the casual way that had become second nature with him.

He had learned to be always more or less on his guard.

He walked along down Broadway at a fairly swift pace.

The street was crowded.

This, of course, made it impossible to make very great speed.

This circumstance made it easy work for Red to follow Dick.

He was soon close behind the youth.

Among so many people, going in both directions, it was impossible that the youth could know that any one of the persons was following him.

"I wish he'd git off'n Broadway," thought Red; "I darsen't jump onter 'im here on the street where there is so menny people. I hope he turns inter some uv ther side streets purty soon; then I'll nab 'im."

Just at the instant that Red thought this, there was a commotion in front of him.

Four or five redcoats, with arms interlocked, were coming up the street.

They were singing in a loud tone of voice, and were forcing the people off the street into the gutter.

Dick saw them coming, and started to step off the walk, to let the fellows pass, as he did not wish any trouble, but he did not move quickly enough to suit the redcoat at the end of the line, and he gave a fierce kick at the youth.

"Get out of the way, you lubber!" the redcoat cried, as he kicked.

Now, this was something that Dick did not like.

He didn't like redcoats, anyway, and when one attempted to kick him, his anger flamed up so quickly that he did not stop to think.

The result was that he treated the redcoat to a surprise.

Dick leaped back far enough so that the fellow's foot did not reach him, and then he quickly caught hold of the redcoat's ankle.

Dick was very strong, and he gave a terrific jerk, which upset the owner of the leg, he going down upon the sidewalk, kerthump!

A howl of pain and rage escaped him.

"Jump on him! Knock him down! Kill him!" the fallen man cried.

Instantly his comrades attacked Dick.

They leaped forward and began raining the blows upon the youth.

Of course, against so many, Dick could not stand his ground.

He was forced backward, off the sidewalk.

He leaped backward, across the gutter.

The redcoats followed.

The one who had been thrown by Dick in such a peculiar manner was now up, and had joined his comrades in the attack on Dick.

"Now go for him, fellows!" cried this worthy. "Let's

knock him down and pound him till he howls like a good fellow!"

The redcoats attempted to obey.

But Dick was so lively on his feet that they found it an extremely difficult matter to get within striking distance.

And when they did succeed in doing so, and struck at the youth, he managed to dodge the blow or evade it in some manner.

The combat was as lively as it was unequal.

Quite a crowd gathered.

It was plain that the sympathy of the crowd was with Dick.

Many of the spectators had been forced off the sidewalk into the gutter by the redcoats, and would have been glad to see the fellows punished; but they thought that, of course, one person, and that person a youth, could not administer any punishment.

They were soon to learn that in thinking thus they were mistaken, however.

Suddenly Dick got the opportunity he had been waiting for.

One of the redcoats got too close.

Out shot Dick's fist.

Crack!

The fist caught the redcoat fair between the eyes.

Down he went, striking the hard ground with a thud.

It was a terrific stroke.

The crowd yelled its approval.

It was what they wished to see, but what they had had no expectation of seeing.

"Hurrah for the youngster!"

"That was a splendid stroke!"

"Indeed it was!"

"Do it again!"

"Knock a few more of them down!"

Such were a few of the exclamations and cries from the crowd.

The other redcoats were made furiously angry by the fall of their comrade.

They rushed upon Dick, furiously.

He was so agile, however, and so wonderfully quick in his movements that they could not get at him.

In their efforts, they were not careful, and Dick got a couple of openings.

Crack! crack!

Dick had delivered two blows.

Both went straight to the marks at which the youth had aimed—the faces of two of his assailants.

Thud! thud!

Down went both.

Shouts of delight went up from the spectators.

They were hugely delighted.

The first redcoat whom Dick had knocked down had been so dazed that he had not yet risen to his feet, and so three of the fellows were down now, at the same time.

There were only two more, and now Dick took the offensive.

He attacked the two with terrible fury.

They had been dismayed by the downfall of their comrades, and now the sudden, fierce attack of the youth disconcerted them greatly.

They gave ground, and in doing so stumbled over the prostrate forms of the fallen men.

At the same instant Dick succeeded in landing a blow on each of the two, and as they had lost their balance the blows sent them to the ground with considerable force.

All five of the redcoats were now piled up on the ground—placed there by one person!

And that person was a youth of seemingly not more than eighteen years!

The spectators stared in amazement.

It seemed to be almost unbelievable.

Yet they had seen it with their own eyes, and could not do otherwise than believe.

They were hugely delighted.

"Hurrah for the young fellow!"

"He is a wonder!"

"He certainly is!"

"Look out for them fellers when they git up, my boy!"

Such were a few of the exclamations and remarks indulged in by the crowd.

But, strange to say, when the redcoats got up they did not renew the combat, but walked hastily away, up the street.

They were followed by jeers from the crowd.

"You are a pretty set!"

"Thet's right; we don't blame ye fur takin' er sneak!"

"You were whipped by one person, and that a boy!"

"You are brave soldiers!"

But the redcoats made no reply.

They were smart enough to know when they had enough, and did not want any more of Dick.

CHAPTER VI.

DICK SURPRISED.

The crowd manifested an inclination to make a hero of Dick.

They cheered him and made all kinds of complimentary remarks.

Even redcoats who had been among the spectators said things of a complimentary nature.

They did so more out of disgust for the action of their comrades than for any other reason, however.

Dick had no wish to pose as a hero.

He was a modest youth.

He had been forced into the difficulty with the redcoats, and had simply done his best.

He had no liking for combats of the kind he had just been engaged in.

Hence he did not wish to be lionized by the crowd.

He made his way through the crowd, and hastened on down the street.

"Red," the fellow who had been shadowing Dick, had been a surprised witness of the entire affair.

To say that he had been surprised to see the youth defeat five redcoats in a fist fight is putting it mildly.

"Blazes!" he muttered, as he followed Dick down the street. "The youngster is a terror, an' no mistake!

"Who'd a-thought it? I wouldn't, I'm shore, an' I didn't think I'd hev enny trubble a-handlin' ther young feller; but now thet I've seen what he kin do, I don't know 'bout et."

Red kept his eyes on Dick, and kept up a lot of thinking.

Presently his face cleared.

"What wuz I thinkin' erbout?" he said to himself, in disgust. "I don't intend ter engage ther youngster in er a'r fight. My game is ter jump onter 'im frum behind, an' ef I kain't han'le 'im then, I oughter git thumped!"

This reasoning made Red feel much better.

His face wore a satisfied, confident look.

He evidently thought he would have no trouble in getting the better of the youth by taking him by surprise.

It was reasonable to suppose that he could do so.

Presently he drew a breath of satisfaction.

"Thet is more like et!" he murmured.

Dick had turned aside, and was going down a side street.

The street was not well lighted.

There was a lamp-post only about every three blocks, and between there was a long strip where it was almost as dark as it would have been in a deep forest.

It was darker than it would have been out in the open country, for there the snow would have lightened it up, but here on the pavements the snow had melted, and there was not enough to make it light.

Dick walked rapidly onward.

He was seemingly in a hurry.

The man behind quickened his pace.

He wished to overhaul the youth as quickly as possible.

He drew near the youth.

He had approached to within a few yards of Dick when the youth reached a street where there was a lamp-post.

Red muttered under his breath, and held back.

It would not do to try to get near enough to leap upon his intended victim until after he had gotten beyond the light thrown out by the street lamp.

Soon Dick was in the dark again, and then Red hastened forward.

He made just as little noise as possible, of course, but he was not as light-footed as a fawn.

He made a slight noise with his foot, and Dick, who had very keen hearing, heard it.

He whirled instantly.

The man was in the act of leaping upon Dick.

He was so close that, dark as it was, Dick could see him.

Dick had no time to leap out of the way, but he promptly grappled with his assailant.

The struggle which ensued was a fierce one.

Dick's assailant was a powerful fellow.

So far as that was concerned, however, he was no stronger than Dick.

The youth was phenomenally strong.

Although taken at a disadvantage, he was able to hold his own.

Backward and forward across the narrow street the two reeled.

It was a terrible struggle.

Dick, of course, had no idea who his assailant was, or why he had been attacked.

The fellow might be a desperado from the slums of the city, or he might be a redcoat.

It did not matter, however; in either case, it would be bad for the youth if his assailant should triumph over him.

The youth was determined that this should not occur.

He fought with desperate energy.

"Red" began to puff and blow.

He was becoming tired.

He was not accustomed to making such exertions.

Here again Dick had the advantage.

He was possessed of splendid wind and staying powers.

He realized that his opponent was becoming winded.

This was the signal for him to redouble his exertions.

Long experience had taught him that if an advantage, once gained, was improved, victory was likely to ensue.

So Dick made the most of his advantage.

He was working hard to get a throat hold.

If he could succeed in doing this he would be able by means of his iron grip to quickly terminate the contest.

Presently he succeeded.

He got his hand on the fellow's throat.

He compressed his fingers with all his might.

A gasping, gurgling cry of pain and terror escaped the lips of his opponent.

Dick squeezed with all his power.

His iron grip was getting in its work.

The youth's antagonist was utterly unable to get his breath.

He gurgled and gasped and made desperate efforts to do so, but to no avail.

He grew rapidly weaker.

Presently his knees gave way and he sank to the ground.

Dick still maintained his grip on the fellow's throat.

He thought it best to choke the man into insensibility.

Dick was on an important quest and he did not wish to be followed.

By choking the man into insensibility he would be enabled to get away in safety.

Otherwise, he might not.

The man might follow him.

Dick waited till he was sure the fellow was unconscious.

Then he let go of the man's throat.

He looked up and down the street.

He could see no one.

"Good! the coast is clear," he murmured; "I will get away from here as quickly as possible."

With a glance at the form of his late antagonist, Dick walked away.

Dick had no scruples in leaving the fellow lying in the street.

It was not cold enough, so that there would be no likelihood that the man would freeze to death.

He would regain consciousness in a few minutes, and by that time Dick would be well out of the way.

Dick walked on down the street a distance of about two blocks.

Then he paused in front of a large, brick building.

"I think this must be the place," he said to himself; "let's see, M. Dumont's room is on the fourth floor; I'll go right up and will soon know whether or not this is the right building."

Dick stepped into the hallway and made his way up the stairs.

It was quite dark, and in order to find his way Dick kept his hand on the railing.

Dick reached the first landing and following the rail,

made his way to the foot of the second flight of stairs and ascended them.

He did the same with the next, and the next.

He was now on the fourth floor.

He made his way along the hall, which was a long one, extending clear to the rear of the building.

"The commander-in-chief said that M. Dumont's room was the last one on the left-hand side," thought Dick; "so I guess I will be able to find it, even in the darkness."

Dick kept on until he reached the rear wall of the building.

Then he placed his hand against the wall at the left, and, turning, felt his way back until he came to a door.

"This must be it," he thought; "I'll soon find out, anyway."

He rapped on the door.

Then he listened.

There was no reply.

Dick waited as long as he thought necessary, and then rapped again.

Again he listened.

"Jove! I don't believe there's any one there," thought Dick.

He was on the point of rapping again, even more loudly, when he heard a noise within the room.

Some one was stirring.

"I guess he's there, after all," thought Dick. "Good! I'm glad of it."

Then a voice called out:

"Who is there?"

"Are you M. Dumont?" was Dick's counter query.

"Why do you ask?" came back.

Dick could not help smiling.

"We are both more for asking questions than for answering them," he thought.

Then aloud he said:

"I wish to see M. Dumont."

"You wish to see M. Dumont?"

"Yes."

"Why do you wish to see him?"

"I have business with him."

"Ah! You have?"

"I have."

"Who are you?"

"I am a friend."

"A friend?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me your name?"

"I think I had better not do so—not until I am sure you are the man I am seeking."

"Your caution is commendable."
 "I think it best to be cautious."
 "Oh, it is best, without a doubt."
 "Undoubtedly; and now, are you M. Dumont?"
 "Yes, that is my name."
 "Then open the door at once."
 "Wait a moment; I am not yet dressed."
 "Very well."
 Dick heard the man moving about in the room.
 He waited patiently.
 Presently he heard the bolt pushed back.
 Then the key turned in the lock.
 Next the door opened.
 There was a candle burning on a small table at the farther side of the room.
 It illumined the room only fairly well.
 The man held the door open, and invited Dick to enter.
 He stood behind the door so that the youth could see only his head and shoulders.
 Dick stepped through the doorway, unhesitatingly.
 As he did so, and turned toward the man, the door went shut with a slam, pushed by the fellow's left hand, while in his right was a pistol, which was leveled full at Dick's breast!

CHAPTER VII.

"OPEN IN THE NAME OF THE KING!"

Dick was taken entirely by surprise.
 He had not been expecting any such action on the man's part.
 The reason of this was because he had taken it for granted that the man in the room was M. Dumont.
 Now, however, he was sure that the man was not M. Dumont.
 He felt that he had gotten himself into a trap.
 If the man was not M. Dumont he was probably an enemy to the patriot cause.
 Doubtless he had heard of M. Dumont.
 In that case, Dick was in for it.
 The man held the youth at his mercy.
 At least, so it seemed.
 Dick was not yet willing to concede this, however.
 True, the man had him covered by the pistol, but Dick had been in a great many tight places in his time, and had escaped, and he did not despair of being able to get out of this difficulty.

He realized that it would probably be a hard task, however.

The man had the advantage all on his side.

Dick was a shrewd youth.

When the lion's skin ran short he did not disdain to eke it out with that of the fox.

He pretended to be greatly frightened.

He made his legs tremble, and even succeeded in chattering his teeth in excellent imitation of the real article, when the owner of the teeth is badly frightened.

"Please, mister, be careful!" he said, in trembling tones; "that pistol might go off!"

"So it might!" with a grim smile.

Then he asked:

"Who are you?"

Dick was thinking, rapidly.

He did not intend that this fellow should learn anything if he could help it, and he thought he could.

"M-my name is Tom, sir," he replied; "Tom Wilson."

"Tom Welson, eh?"

"Y-yes, sir."

The man was eyeing Dick, sternly and searchingly.

"Are you telling the truth?" he asked.

Dick nodded.

"Oh, y-yes, sir," he said; "I—I w-wouldn't think of telling you anything but the truth."

"That is a good thing!"

Then he asked:

"Why did you wish to see M. Dumont?"

Dick had anticipated this question.

He was ready with an answer.

"I was sent here, sir," he said.

The man's eyes sparkled.

"You were sent here, eh?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"Who sent you?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What's that! You don't know?"

Dick started back in pretended horror at the fierce tone of the other.

"That's what I said, sir; I don't know," Dick stammered.

The man looked doubtful.

It was evident that he had doubts regarding the truth of this statement.

"Do you mean to say you don't know who sent you?" he asked.

"Y-yes, sir."

"How can that be?"

"Why, you see, it was this way, s-sir: I was walking along the street, a while ago, and a man came up to me

and asked me if I wanted to make a shilling, and I told him I did. Then he said for me to come up here and tell M. Dumont to come down onto the street. That's all I know about it, mister."

The man eyed Dick searchingly.

It was evident that he was puzzled.

He hardly knew what to think—judging by the look on his face.

Dick was watching the man like a hawk.

He was watching for a chance to take the fellow un-
-awares.

Dick was bound to get out of this scrape, if such a thing was possible.

He was willing to take big chances, rather than let the man search him and find the letter of introduction to M. Dumont.

If the man were to find that he would know who Dick was, and that would be bad—for the youth was confident the fellow was a Tory.

He was not a friend, anyway.

That much was evident.

Dick kept his eyes open, although seemingly terribly frightened.

"You say a man sent you here to tell M. Dumont to come down onto the street?" the man asked.

"Y-yes, mister."

"Did he say why he wished to see M. Dumont?"

"No, mister."

"Was he down there when you came up?"

"Yes, mister."

"Humph!"

The man stared at Dick, fixedly.

The youth met the look unflinchingly.

Presently the man came to a decision.

"You may be speaking the truth," he said, "but I doubt it. I am going to search you!"

This, of course, was the one thing of all which Dick did not wish done.

He must not permit himself to be searched.

The man hesitated an instant, and then half lowered his pistol.

This was enough for Dick.

He acted.

Quick as a flash, too.

His fist shot out, striking the man squarely between the eyes.

Down the fellow went, with a crash.

The pistol fell to the floor.

Instantly Dick drew his own pistol and covered the fallen

man. He waited till the fellow rose to a sitting posture, and then said, warningly:

"Hold! Be careful! Don't try to get up, or it will be the worse for you!"

The man stared at Dick with a look of rage.

Too late he realized that the seemingly frightened youth was a brave and daring one.

He saw that he was in the power of one who would not hesitate to shoot, if it became necessary to do so.

He tried to do a little in the bluffing line, however.

"What do you mean by striking me?" he growled.

"What did you mean by pretending you were M. Dumont, and threatening me with a pistol?" retorted Dick.

"I didn't say I was M. Dumont," was the sullen reply.

"Well, you gave me to understand that you were."

"Perhaps I did, and what then?"

"Nothing much; only I do not admire this thing of inveigling one into a room and threatening him with a pistol."

The man forced a laugh.

"Oh, that was only a joke," he asserted.

Dick smiled in an unbelieving manner.

"Only a joke, eh?"

"That's all—just a joke."

"My friend, I think you are the biggest kind of a liar!" Dick said, calmly.

The man's face grew even darker with anger.

He cast a longing glance toward where his pistol lay.

Dick saw and understood the look.

"It's no use," he said; "you needn't think of trying to get hold of your pistol, for I won't permit it. I have you wholly in my power, and before we part company you will tell me who you are and why you tried to play such a trick on me!"

"I tell you it was a joke."

"You said that before."

"It is the truth, too."

"Yet, I do not believe it. What is your name?"

Before the man could reply there came the sound of footsteps out in the hall, and then the door opened and a man entered the room.

He paused and stared at the strange tableau in amazement.

"Well, well! What is the meaning of this?" he cried. And then addressing himself to the man on his knees on the floor, he continued:

"Why are you here, Henry Wardlaw?"

The man addressed as Henry Wardlaw had grown deathly pale when the newcomer entered the room.

"Who are you, sir?" asked Dick.

A sudden suspicion had entered his mind, and he wished to verify it or prove it groundless.

The newcomer glanced at Dick.

"Who am I?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I am M. Dumont."

Dick started.

An exclamation of pleasure escaped him.

"I thought so!" he cried; and then he pointed to the man on the floor.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"You just heard me mention his name—Henry Wardlaw."

"I know; but I mean, what is he?"

"He is, I am afraid, a scoundrel!"

Dick nodded.

"I think you are right about that," he said.

"Please explain this matter," said M. Dumont; "I do not understand it at all."

"I can explain my part of it very quickly," said Dick; "I came here in search of M. Dumont. I knocked on the door, and after some delay this man opened it; and when he entered he closed the door and threatened me with the pistol you see lying there on the floor. I parleyed with him for a few minutes, and then succeeded in catching him by his guard and knocking him down. I have been holding him here and putting a few questions to him, but had not succeeded in getting much out of him when you put in your appearance. What I would like to know is, how long he has been here in the room, if you are M. Dumont?"

M. Dumont nodded.

"That is what I would like to know, too!" he said, firmly.

Then he fixed his eyes on the man and said, sternly:

"Get up!"

The man obeyed, with alacrity, though he looked at Dick in a somewhat fearful manner.

"Oh, it is all right if M. Dumont says so," said Dick; "get up, but don't try any tricks."

"Now," went on M. Dumont, "I wish an explanation, Henry Wardlaw. What were you doing here in my room during my absence?"

The man paled, but answered as boldly as he could:

"I thought you were here when I came."

M. Dumont frowned and shook his head.

"Wardlaw, I am confident you are telling an untruth!"

he said. "You saw me down the street about an hour ago, and I am sure you knew I was not here."

The man protested that such was not the case.

M. Dumont was evidently at a loss what to do.

He looked at Dick, irresolutely.

"Have you any objections to my letting this man go?" he asked.

"None, whatever," replied Dick; "you know him, while I do not, and you should know better what to do than I."

M. Dumont turned to the man.

"You may go," he said; "you may go, but beware! Do not try any more tricks in the future, if you know when you are well off. I don't know what your reasons were for coming here when I was away, but it certainly availed you nothing, so I will let you go—this time. Don't do it again, that is all!"

The man stooped and secured his pistol.

He shot a quick glance at Dick.

He saw that the youth was watching him like a hawk, and that he held his pistol in readiness for instant use.

A sarcastic smile crossed the youth's face.

It was the same as if he had said:

"I understand what you thought of doing, but it doesn't do!"

Wardlaw evidently thought it would not do to try to get even with the youth who had turned the tables on him so neatly.

He looked somewhat disconcerted, and placed the pistol in his pocket.

Then he made his way to the door and stepped out into the hall.

He gave Dick one quick, backward glance of hatred, and then hastened away.

The two listened to the receding footsteps until the man was in the hall below them, and then M. Dumont turned to Dick.

He gave the youth a keen, searching look.

"If I may ask, to whom do I owe the honor of this visit?" he asked.

"My name is Dick Slater," the youth replied, quietly.

M. Dumont started.

"Dick Slater!"

Dick nodded.

"That is my name."

A look of pleasure appeared on the face of the man.

"I have heard of you—have heard of you often!" he cried. "You are General Washington's right-hand man, when it comes to scouting and spying among the redcoats—is it not so?"

Dick blushed.

"Well, I have done some work which the commander-in-chief has seen fit to compliment," he replied. "I have tried, always, to do my duty."

"And if the half I have heard is true, you have done

your duty, and a great deal more! Shake hands, my boy! I am glad to make your acquaintance!"

Dick shook hands with M. Dumont, and then drawing the letter of introduction and explanation from his pocket, he handed it to the Frenchman.

M. Dumont read the letter.

"Well! well!" he exclaimed. "So you came direct from the commander-in-chief?"

Dick bowed.

"Yes, sir; straight from Morristown."

"And how did you leave things there, my boy?"

"Things seem to be in fair shape, sir."

"I am glad of that!"

Then M. Dumont referred to the letter and said:

"I see that the commander-in-chief wishes to know whether or not I have heard anything regarding the ships which were to bring over arms and provisions from France."

Then he went ahead and told Dick that the ships were now standing off the New Jersey coast, and that they would make a landing in a bay a hundred miles south from New York, and that the cargoes would there be unloaded and hauled overland in wagons.

They were talking earnestly when the sound of trampling feet was heard in the hall.

"Listen!" said M. Dumont. "What does that mean?"

Dick leaped to the door and bolted it.

He jumped to the conclusion that the trampling feet meant danger for himself and companion.

The steps approached, and came to a halt in front of the door.

Then some one rapped on the door, and an imperative voice cried:

"Open in the name of the king!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE LIVERY STABLE.

The two looked at each other for a few moments in silence.

Then a thought struck Dick.

"Wardlaw!" he whispered.

M. Dumont nodded.

"I guess you are right," he agreed.

"What shall we do?" asked Dick. "We are in a trap!"

"Come," whispered M. Dumont; "we will escape them."

He led the way into a small inner room, closing and bolting the door behind him.

They heard another loud rapping on the hall door as they did this.

"They'll break the door down in a minute," said Dick.

"That is undoubtedly what they will do," agreed M. Dumont; "and they must not find us here when they come in."

Dick wondered how they were to get out.

He could see no possible chance for them to escape.

But M. Dumont did not seem to doubt their ability to do so.

He leaped upon a table and reached upward.

Dick noticed, then, that there was a trap-door in the ceiling.

M. Dumont pushed the trap-door open.

He reached up through the opening and fumbled about for a moment.

Then he pulled down what proved to be a rope ladder.

The ladder just came to the top of the table.

M. Dumont leaped lightly to the floor.

He pointed to the ladder and trap-door.

"Up with you—quick!" he said to Dick. "There are few things I wish to get before I go."

Dick climbed upon the table, and then climbed up the rope and through the hole in the ceiling.

M. Dumont unlocked a drawer in a desk and took forth some papers, which he placed in his pockets, then he came to the table and climbed upon it.

At this instant there was a loud crash.

Loud and excited voices were heard in the outer room.

Then there came a loud rapping on the connecting door.

"Open the door in the name of the king!" cried an imperative voice. "Open at once, or we will burst this door down, as we did the other!"

M. Dumont made no answer.

He handed the candle up to Dick, and then quickly climbed the rope ladder.

As soon as he was through the hole in the ceiling he pulled the rope ladder up through, and closed the trap door.

"Come," he said to Dick; "we will fool them, this time."

Taking the candle, M. Dumont led the way, Dick following.

Dick had been looking about him while waiting for his companion.

He had seen that he was in the attic.

M. Dumont led the way across the attic.

They were both careful to step only on the strong sleepers, for had they stepped on the laths they would have gone through.

M. Dumont presently stopped at a trap-door similar to the one through which they had come.

Dick had noted a dozen or more of the doors as they went along, and understood that every room had one.

M. Dumont opened the trap-door, and then fastening the rope ladder by means of the two iron hooks on the end, he climbed down through the hole.

Dick, looking down, saw that there was a table underneath the trap-door, and that the room was empty, save for some furniture.

"Come on," said M. Dumont.

Dick obeyed.

He climbed down into the room.

M. Dumont then mounted the table, unhooked the iron hooks and dropped the rope ladder on the table.

Next he fastened the trap-door firmly by means of a couple of stout hooks.

"There," he said, in a tone of satisfaction, "I guess those fellows won't find us now."

Dick smiled and nodded.

"I judge you are right," he said; "you have played a very neat trick on them. How came you to have things fixed in this fashion?"

"I did it on purpose, so that in case I should ever be captured by the minions of King George I could give them a slip."

"Ah, I see!"

It was certainly a splendid scheme.

The redcoats were now in the rooms he had occupied, but M. Dumont was not there.

He had disappeared.

This would no doubt be a big puzzle to the redcoats.

Dick wondered if they would know where to look for M. Dumont.

He asked his companion if they would be likely to know where he had gone.

"They may suspect that we went up into the attic, through the trap-door," was the reply, "but when they look, they will fail to find us, and that will put an end to the fair."

Dick hoped that it would be as M. Dumont said.

M. Dumont seemed to feel perfectly secure.

He resumed the conversation relative to the ships from France, and was telling Dick the plans for getting the cargoes ashore and to the patriot encampment, when the sound of trampling feet was heard.

The sound came from overhead, and Dick seized M. Dumont by the arm, and pointed upward.

The other nodded.

"They are in the attic, searching for us," he said, in a whisper.

Louder sounded the trampling, and presently it was evident that a number of the men were immediately over the room in which were M. Dumont and Dick.

They were silent, and listened intently.

They could hear what the men were saying.

"I don't see what in blazes has become of them!" growled a voice, which the listeners identified as being that of Wardlaw. "They must have come up into the attic."

"Yes," in another voice, "there was no other place for them to go."

"Perhaps they had left the room before we came," suggested another voice.

"I don't think so," in Wardlaw's voice; "they did not expect that I would be after them. They were there when we knocked on the door, I am confident."

"Well, then, if they were there, and came up into the attic, where are they now?"

"I'll tell you where I think they are," said another voice.

"Where?" was asked.

"Down on the street, getting away from this locality at a lively rate, and laughing at us."

"How could they have done this?" asked Wardlaw.

"Why, don't you see? They have climbed down into a room, through one of the trap-doors, have stepped out into the hall and made their escape."

"By Jove! I judge you are right!"

"Of course I'm right; and we might just as well be getting away from here. We are wasting our time."

Then came the sound of trampling feet.

The men were making their way back in the direction from which they had come.

M. Dumont and Dick listened and waited.

Ten minutes passed, and then the trampling feet was heard again.

This time the sound came from the hallway.

"They are going," whispered M. Dumont.

Dick nodded.

The men passed the door, their footsteps sounding plainly, and then made their way to the end of the hall and down the stairs.

"Well, we are safe, now," said M. Dumont.

"Yes, I think they have given up the search for to-night," agreed Dick.

M. Dumont seated himself at a desk and wrote steadily for half an hour.

When he had finished, he handed the letter which he had written to Dick, and said:

"Give that to the commander-in-chief when you return to Morristown."

The youth placed the letter in his pocket.

"Very well, I will do so, sir," he replied; "and now, is that all?"

"Yes, all in the way of business; but you will remain over night with me, will you not?"

Dick hesitated.

"What time is it, I wonder?" he remarked.

M. Dumont looked at his watch.

"It is now ten minutes of two o'clock," he said; "it would be folly for you to start out at such an hour. Remain with me till daylight, at least."

Dick decided to do so.

There was an extra cot in the room, and the two were soon sound asleep.

They were up bright and early, and went out and ate breakfast.

Then Dick bade M. Dumont good-by, and took his departure.

He made his way direct to the livery stable where he had left Major.

He ordered the stable-boy to bridle and saddle his horse, and the boy hastened to do so.

He had just advanced from the rear of the stable, leading Major, when the livery stable man and the fellow known as "Red" entered.

They gave utterance to exclamations of amazement and anger as their eyes fell on Dick.

"There's ther young cuss, now!" cried Red, making a movement as if to rush forward.

Instantly Dick drew his pistols.

"Hold!" he cried, sternly and threateningly; "don't take a step forward, or I shall be under the necessity of putting a bullet through you!"

The men halted and looked at each other irresolutely.

They seemed scarcely to know what to do under the circumstances.

"How much do I owe you for the board of my horse?" asked Dick of the livery stable man.

"Two shillings," was the sullen reply.

Dick replaced one of the pistols in his belt, keeping a wary eye on the two men the while.

"Don't attempt any tricks!" he warned.

He plunged his hand into his pocket and drew out two pieces of silver, which he tossed on the floor at the man's feet.

"There is your money," he said.

Then he stepped back to the side of the horse.

He was about to place his foot in the stirrup when the two men rushed upon him.

Dick had been expecting that they would do so.

Quick as a flash he discharged the pistol.

The liveryman gave utterance to a howl of pain, and fell to the floor with a bullet in his shoulder.

Dick had no desire to take the man's life, and had fired so as not to hit a vital spot.

The other fellow was upon him, now, and Dick dealt Red an overhanded blow with the pistol, which he had reversed in his hand.

The butt was heavily banded with iron, and the man went down, with a thud.

Instantly Dick thrust the pistol into his belt and vaulted into the saddle.

At a word from the youth, Major leaped forward.

He was out of the stable like a flash, bounding over the prostrate form of the wounded stableman.

Dick rode down the street at a gallop.

He realized that there was need of haste.

The pistol shot had aroused the people in the vicinity.

They were running toward the stable from every direction.

Some of the men seemed to think that Dick had something to do with the affair, and attempted to head the youth off.

He drew his pistol and flourished it threateningly, however, and they got out of the way in a hurry.

They did not seem to be so eager to stop the youth after the display of the weapon.

They let Dick go on his way and hastened onward toward the stable.

When they got there they found a groaning man wounded in the shoulder, and an insensible one, from a crack on the skull by the butt of Dick's pistol.

Of course, they were excited, and when told by the stable-boy that the youth who had just ridden out of the stable had done the work, they made great haste to rush out of doors and yell for some one to stop the fleeing horseman.

Of course, Dick was so far away now that no one could stop him, and the men re-entered the stable, and assisted in taking care of the wounded stableman, and bringing Red back to consciousness.

Dick rode quite rapidly and was soon at the Common.

Crossing it, he rode northward on the Bloomingdale road.

He kept Major at a good gait, for he feared that pursuit might be attempted.

He kept a sharp lookout behind him, but did not see any signs of pursuers, and presently he eased Major down to an ordinary gallop.

"There is no need of your exerting yourself, old fellow," said; "we are safe, now, I think."

and this was the case.

little more than an hour later, he was crossing the on Hank's ferryboat, and then he rode away in the tion of Morristown.

reached the patriot encampment at that point about o'clock, and went at once to headquarters.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE OLD SUGAR-HOUSE.

General Washington greeted Dick cordially.

"You made a quick trip, Dick!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather quick, your excellency."

"What success did you have? Did you see M. Dumont?"

"Yes, sir; here is a letter which he gave me to bring you."

Dick drew the letter from his pocket and handed it to the commander-in-chief.

General Washington took the letter, opened it and read the contents.

"Good!" he exclaimed, when he had finished. "Everything is all right; you have done well, Dick, my boy."

"I am glad you are pleased," said Dick, simply. "By the way, your excellency, I wish to ask a favor."

"Granted before you ask it, Dick; what is it?"

"I wish to be allowed to take some of my 'Liberty Boys' and go on an expedition."

"Where to, Dick?"

"To New York."

"Ah! What for?"

"I will tell you, your excellency. I wish to make an attempt to free some patriot prisoners."

General Washington pondered a few moments.

"That will be dangerous business, Dick," he said.

"There is danger in everything, your excellency."

"True, Dick; but who are the prisoners and why are they in prison?"

"There are about ten prisoners, your excellency, and of them are 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Do you know where they are imprisoned?"

"Yes, your excellency; in the old sugar-house at the corner of Liberty Street, on the Hudson."

"Do you think that you can succeed in freeing them?"

"I believe so, sir; I wish to be allowed to make the at-

tempt, at any rate, and shall consider it a great favor if you will permit me to do so."

The commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments.

He was evidently thinking deeply.

Dick watched the great man, eagerly and anxiously.

Presently General Washington came to a decision.

"I granted your request before I knew what it was, Dick," he said slowly. "And while I think the undertaking to be a very dangerous one, yet I will not go back on my word; you may go ahead and I hope that you may be successful."

"Thank you, your excellency," said Dick; "we will succeed if such a thing is possible."

"Be very careful, Dick."

"I will be careful, sir."

"When will you start?"

"This afternoon."

"Then you will make the attempt to-night?"

"Yes, your excellency."

The commander-in-chief gave Dick his hand.

"Good-by," he said; "and may success attend your efforts."

Dick said good-by, saluted and withdrew.

He hastened to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

He selected nine of the youths.

Among the nine were Bob Estabrook, Mark Morrison and Sam Sanderson.

"Boys, I have work for you," said Dick.

"Good!" cried Bob. "We're glad of that."

"That's right," agreed Mark Morrison; "we would rather work than sit around here."

The others said the same.

"What is the work?" asked Bob.

Dick told them.

The youths were all excitement at once.

"That is the kind of work for me!" said Bob.

"It suits me!" declared Mark.

The others said the same.

"Jove! I hope we'll succeed in freeing the prisoners," said Bob.

"I hope so," agreed Dick; "and I believe that we will be able to succeed, too. We will certainly make a good try for it."

Then Dick explained his plans.

The youths listened with attention.

When they had heard all their young commander had to say, preparations were begun for the work in hand.

They looked at their weapons.

Then they made such other arrangements as were necessary, and by that time it was three o'clock.

They ate lunch, after which they bridled and saddled their horses, mounted and rode away.

They rode steadily onward for four hours.

They reached the cabin of Hank, the ferryman, about half-past seven.

The youths dismounted and led their horses into the timber a distance of fifty yards and tied them to trees.

They had brought ten extra horses which were to be ridden on the return trip, by their comrades who were in the prison pen, in case they were successful in freeing the prisoners.

This done, the youths turned to the cabin.

Hank was just coming up from the landing.

It was a clear night and the boatman recognized Dick at once.

"Hello, Dick!" he exclaimed. "Are you back again so soon?"

"Yes, Hank; and we are on serious business, to-night."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; and, Hank, we want your help."

"What are you going to try to do, Dick?"

"We're going to try to free some prisoners."

"To free some prisoners?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts are they, Dick?"

"Do you remember the old sugar-house down at the foot of Liberty Street, Hank?"

"Indeed, I do! I put in more than one hard day's work there."

"Well, that is where the prisoners are."

"And you say you want me to help you?"

"Yes."

"In what way can I do it?"

"Why, by taking us down and across the river in your ferryboat."

"Oh, so that's what you want me to do?"

"Yes, will you do it, Hank?"

The man hesitated.

"Supposing some redcoats should come along and want to be ferried over the river and stay here till we come back?"

"In that case, Hank, we will take care of the redcoats; I'll guarantee that they won't cause any trouble."

"All right, Dick; I'll do what you want me to. I'll take you down and across the river in my ferryboat."

"Good for you, Hank!"

"I suppose you will want to be landed at the foot of Liberty Street?"

"Yes, Hank; or as near there as you think it safe for us to go."

"I think it will be safe to go right up to the back of the old sugar-house, Dick; you know it is built on the pier and the rear of the building is flush with the outer edge of the pier."

"Yes, I know that such is the case, Hank. And now how long will it take you to make the trip down?"

"Oh, about an hour and a half."

"Very well; we will wait here until about ten o'clock then, as I do not wish to arrive there earlier than half-past eleven."

"All right; come into the cabin, boys, where it is warm."

The youths followed Hank into the cabin.

There was a roaring fire in the huge fireplace, at one end of the room, and its blaze looked cheerful, indeed.

"It's a mighty lucky thing you came to me, Dick," said Hank, when the youths had seated themselves; "I think that I can be of even more use to you than you expected."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Dick, eagerly.

"Yes," was the reply; "you remember that I said while ago that I had put in more than one hard day's work in the old sugar house?"

"Yes, I remember, Hank."

"Well, while doing so, I learned a few things about the old building, and I have no doubt that I have more knowledge regarding it than have any of the redcoats."

"I don't doubt it, either, Hank. Now, if you just knew of any way to enter the building without the knowledge of the redcoats, we would be all right."

Hank grinned.

"Then you're all right," he said, triumphantly.

The youths became excited at once.

"Do you mean to say that you know a secret way of entering the building, Hank?" asked Dick, eagerly.

"I certainly do mean to say that very thing," said Hank; "that is to say, I think I do. It might be possible that the redcoats have stumbled upon the secret, but I doubt it."

"Where is this entrance, Hank?"

"In the floor."

"In the floor?"

"Yes; there is a trap-door in the floor, and right underneath the trap-door there is a hole through the pier and a short flight of steps leads down to the water."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes; we can row a boat right in under the pier and right up to the foot of the steps; then it will be an easy matter to enter the building."

"But don't you suppose the redcoats have discovered the trap-door, Hank?" asked Dick.

"I hardly think so," was the reply; "the trap-door is in a little shed-room at one end of the building, and it probably has escaped the observation of the redcoats as the room is too small to be used. We used to use it simply as a storeroom for the ski ds and tools used in handling heavy barrels."

"Oh, I see," remarked Dick; "but perhaps when we get in there we won't be able to get on into the main building."

"Why not?"

"The door will probably be locked and barred."

Hank shook his head.

"There is a door," he said, "but there is neither lock nor bar—or, at least, there wasn't when I was there last."

"Perhaps there is now, though, Hank."

"I don't think so, Dick; you see, there is no outer door opening into this shed, so the redcoats would not be afraid of any one getting in by way of that room. Naturally they would not think of bolting or barring the door opening from the shed into the main room."

"I hope they haven't done so," said Dick, "and in that case we will be able to get into the building with but little trouble."

"You are right, and I think we will be able to work it."

"Have you a small boat, Hank?" asked Dick.

"Yes."

"Good! then we will be all right."

The youths and the ferryman sat there for more than two hours, talking, and at last Dick rose and said:

"It is time we were going."

All left the cabin and walked down to the landing.

They boarded the ferryboat, and Hank tied the painter of the small boat to the stern of the large boat and all was ready for the start.

It was not such a very dark night, the stars shining brightly, but there was no moon, and it was dark enough so that they would not likely be seen by any one on either shore of the river.

Hank held to the centre of the stream and headed down toward the city.

As there was no particular hurry, he did not use the big oars, simply allowing the boat to drift down with the current.

This would land them at their destination in an hour and a half.

Onward the boat drifted, for an hour and a quarter, and then Hank began edging in toward the shore.

Fifteen minutes later he brought the ferryboat up against the old sugar-house at the foot of Liberty Street.

Hank made the boat fast, so it would not float away, and

then all remained silent for a few minutes, to see if their coming had been noticed.

There was no outcry, no stir of any kind, and it was decided that they had succeeded in reaching their destination without having been seen.

This was encouraging, indeed.

The small boat was drawn up alongside the ferryboat, and five of the youths got in.

Hank followed.

"I will take the five of you to the steps underneath the wharf," whispered Hank to Dick; "and then will return for the others. It would not be safe to put ten in."

"I guess I will leave five of the boys on the ferryboat," said Dick; "I don't think we will need more than we have in the boat now, to make a success of the affair."

Then he told the five to remain quietly on board the ferryboat and keep a sharp lookout.

A moment later the small boat glided in under the pier, impelled by the oars wielded by Hank's strong arms.

He rowed very slowly, however.

He knew his way well, but it was very dark in under the pier, and he was afraid he might bump against something and alarm the sentinels on guard in the building above.

The steps were soon reached, however, and the youths climbed out of the boat.

Hank followed, and then tied the painter to one of the steps.

"Now follow me," he whispered.

He made his way up the steps, moving slowly and carefully, as it was essential that no noise be made.

The youths followed.

Hank felt around, and then pushed upward against the trap-door.

It gave way and moved slowly upward, creaking as it did so.

It was evident that it had not been used recently.

When it was part way up, Hank paused and took a cautious survey of the situation.

That is to say, he took as much of a survey of the situation as was possible.

It was dark in the little room and he could see scarcely anything at all.

He listened a few moments, but heard nothing.

Hank pushed the trap-door on up till it rested against the wall.

Then he stepped up into the little room, followed by Dick and his comrades.

Then Hank stepped to the door which opened into the main building.

Taking hold of the knob he turned it and pulled.

The door came open.

Only a few inches, however; Hank knew better than to pull the door clear open.

He peered through into the main room.

After a moment he stepped aside and gave way to Dick.

The youth took a careful survey of the situation.

The prisoners were there.

They were huddled together at the farther end of the room.

Pacing backward and forward across the room, at the end where Dick and his friend were, were two sentinels.

They had muskets in their hands, and, luckily for Dick and his comrades, they kept their faces turned toward the prisoners.

In walking across the room the sentinels did not keep together, but came from opposite sides and met and passed each other at the centre.

Dick quickly made his plan known to his comrades.

His plan was very simple.

They would wait till the redcoats met and passed each other at the middle of the room, and then as they walked away, with their backs toward the door, the "Liberty Boys" would leap out upon them.

The youths made ready for the attempt.

Just at the right time Dick gave the signal.

The youths bounded through the doorway, and, leaping upon the backs of the redcoats, bore them to the floor.

"Don't utter a sound!" cried Dick, sternly. "If you do, it will be your death-warrant!"

The two sentinels, seeing that they were greatly outnumbered, did not make any resistance to speak of, and were quickly overpowered and bound.

They were mute, too, being afraid to call out.

"There!" exclaimed Dick, in a satisfied tone, "so far, our plan has been a success; now if we can only get the prisoners out of here before it is discovered what has occurred, all will be well."

Dick placed one of the "Liberty Boys" on guard over the two sentinels, with instructions to shoot the fellows if they opened their mouths.

Then he and the rest of the youths hastened to where the prisoners were.

The poor fellows were huddled together for warmth, and they could not advance to meet their friends owing to the fact that they were tied to iron rings fastened in the wall.

They were delighted to see their friends, however, and greeted them joyously.

Dick and his comrades quickly cut the ropes binding the

prisoners and the poor fellows were nearly crazy with delight to think that they were going to be free again.

"Come," said Dick, "we must get out of here as quickly as possible. The redcoats may discover what has taken place, at any moment."

Then Dick turned to Hank.

"Hank," he said, "you show our friends the way out of here and take them to the ferryboat as quickly as possible; I and the other boys will remain on guard in here till you have accomplished this."

"All right, Dick."

Then Hank turned to the late prisoners and told them to follow him.

He led the way across the room and through the door at the farther end.

He picked up a candle as he walked along, and by its light he and the ten patriots had no trouble in getting down the steps to where the boat was.

Scarcely had they disappeared when there came a loud knocking on the door which opened upon the street, from the main building.

Dick looked at his comrades in a questioning manner and then he turned to the two sentinels.

"Have you any idea who that may be?" he asked, sternly.

"It is the man coming to relieve me," was the reply; "my two hours are up."

"Ah! And is there only one?"

"That is all."

Dick stepped to the door, and, unbarring it, pulled it open.

Suspecting nothing, the redcoat strode into the room.

As he did so, Dick closed the door quickly, and, springing forward, seized the man.

The redcoat had caught sight of the "Liberty Boys" and his trounced-up comrades, and he began struggling with all his might.

It was no use.

The youth threw the fellow to the floor and seized him by the throat.

Dick's grip was iron-like, and the redcoat was as helpless in the youth's hands as a babe would have been.

The other redcoats stared in amazement.

Dick's wonderful show of strength surprised them hugely.

The redcoat was quickly bound, hand and foot, and placed beside his comrades.

At this instant the sound of trampling feet and excited voices outside the building was heard.

"The redcoats are coming, Dick!" cried Bob.

CHAPTER X.

BACK AGAIN IN SAFETY.

Dick leaped toward the door with the intention of putting up the bar.

Too late.

The door opened before he could reach it.

Into the room trooped a lot of redcoats.

Dick gave a quick order and he and his five comrades dashed across the room toward the doorway opening into the little shed-room.

The redcoats fired a volley, but did not stop to take aim; the result being that no particular damage was done.

A bullet grazed Dick's arm, and Mark Morrison was slightly wounded, but none of the other boys were touched.

Whipping out their pistols the youths returned the fire.

They were more successful than the redcoats had been.

Two of the soldiers gave vent to cries of pain and fell to the floor.

"Give them another volley, boys!" cried Dick.

The youths fired another volley, and another redcoat went down.

Then the youths started through the doorway and quickly made their way down the steps.

The boat had gone.

At the same instant they heard the sound of rushing footsteps.

"The redcoats are coming!" cried Dick. "Plunge into the water and swim for it."

The youths did not hesitate.

They knew that it would be death to remain where they were.

The redcoats could fire down upon them at close range and could not fail to do deadly execution.

The youths plunged into the water and swam in the direction of the ferryboat.

The redcoats entered the little room and made their way down the steps, but it was so dark they could see nothing.

They fired a number of shots at random, hoping to kill or wound one or more of the youths.

Fortunately none of the bullets took effect, though several came perilously near the swimming youths.

Dick and his comrades were soon out from underneath the pier and alongside the ferryboat.

The water was very cold and they were so chilled as to be unable to climb upon the boat without help.

Their comrades quickly drew them out of the water,

however, and then Hank pushed the ferryboat into the river.

"They'll likely be after us," he said; "I'm afraid we'll have hard work getting away."

"Well, we'll do the best we can," said Dick.

Ordinarily, the ferryboat was operated by one pair of oars, these being worked by Hank, who stood near the centre of the boat.

There were rowlocks for three pairs of oars, however, and the youths quickly got out the extra oars and put them in place.

With the three pairs of oars working, the boat moved through the water at a very fair rate of speed.

"Now if the redcoats don't pursue us," said Hank, "we'll be all right. We ought to reach the cabin in an hour and a half, at least."

There was no certainty that they would not be pursued, however.

There was great excitement in the vicinity of the old sugar-house.

Lights were flaring, men were shouting.

The escape of the prisoners had surely caused a sensation.

Indeed, the redcoats were wild with rage.

They entered boats and rowed out into the river with all possible speed.

As luck would have it, however, the majority of the boats headed down stream.

Several boats went straight across toward the other shore, while two only headed up the river.

The occupants of neither of these boats succeeded in sighting the ferryboat, and it got away in safety.

After an hour and a half of hard work, going against the current, the ferryboat landing was reached.

The boat was made fast and all hastened ashore and made their way up to the cabin.

Dick and the five "Liberty Boys" who had been forced to take to the cold water to make their escape were nearly frozen.

There was a good fire in the fireplace, however, and they quickly doffed their outer clothing and placed it in front of the fire to dry.

Just then the trampling of horses' feet was heard and there was a startled look on the faces of all within the cabin.

Hank made his way on tiptoe to the door and placed the heavy bar in place.

Scarcely had he done so when there came a loud rapping on the door.

Hank made no reply to this.

After a silence of a few moments a voice cried out:

"Hello, in there! Hello! Wake up!"

Still Hank made no reply.

Presently the rapping was repeated.

Hank maintained silence.

He was in hopes that the stranger would become discouraged and go on about his business.

The man outside was evidently not one of the easily discouraged kind, however, for again he called out:

"Hello! hello! Wake up, I say!"

Realizing that the man did not intend to go away, Hank called out:

"Hello, yourself! Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I'm a traveler, bound for New York," was the reply, "and I want you to ferry me over the river."

"You are alone, then?"

"Entirely alone."

"Very well, wait a minute, I'll be out there."

Hank was all ready, but he waited two or three minutes and moved about in the cabin to give the man the impression that he was dressing.

Then Hank unbarred the door, opened it, and, stepping through, pulled the door shut behind him.

There was only one man, as the fellow had said.

Hank eyed the stranger, searchingly.

He was dressed in citizen's clothes, so Hank could not make up his mind whether or not the fellow was a redcoat.

One thing was certain, he was a stranger.

Hank had never seen him before.

"Jove! I'm glad I got you out at last!" the man exclaimed. "It's a cold night, and I would rather be moving on than standing here."

"Come," said Hank.

He led the way down to the landing.

The man followed, leading his horse, and as soon as they were on the boat, Hank pushed off.

Half an hour later Hank was back in the cabin again.

"I hope no one else will come along to-night," he said; "I've pulled that old boat through the water about as much as I want to for one night."

"Indeed you have, Hank," said Dick; "I am sure that but for you and your ferryboat we could not have succeeded in our undertaking."

"Don't speak of it, Dick," said Hank; "that is all right, and I was only too glad to be of service. You're welcome to all I have done."

An hour later the ten "Liberty Boys" and their ten comrades whom they had rescued, bade good-by to Hank, and, mounting their horses, rode away in the direction of Morristown.

They reached there about half-past seven in the morning. Their arrival created considerable excitement.

It was known throughout the encampment that Dick and his nine comrades had gone to New York for the purpose of trying to free the prisoners in the old sugar-house, but the general belief had been that they could not possibly succeed.

But they had done so.

They were back in safety and the ten patriot soldiers who had been in prison in the old sugar-house at the foot of Liberty Street, New York City, were with them.

The statement made by one grim-visaged old veteran that "Dick Slater and his 'Liberty Boys' can do anything," practically voiced the sentiment of the entire patriot army.

Even General Washington, when Dick visited headquarters, and reported the result of the expedition, was amazed.

"Dick," he said, "if it wasn't for the fact that it isn't good policy, as a general thing, to praise young people to their faces, on account of the fact that it is likely to cause their heads to swell to undue proportions, I would say that I think you are the most remarkable young man I have ever seen."

Dick flushed with pleasure.

This was a compliment, and a great one, from one of the greatest men who ever lived.

"I simply aim to do my best under any and all circumstances, your excellency," said Dick; "and if my work has been of a character to please you, then I am glad."

"Well, the work of yourself and your brave 'Liberty Boys' has certainly been of a character to please me," said General Washington.

"I only hope that it will continue to be so, your excellency."

"I don't have any doubts regarding the matter, Dick."

THE END.

The next number (47) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' SUCCESS; OR, DOING WHAT THEY SET OUT TO DO," by Harry Moore.

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